

Iron Eagle Family and Friends,

The relief mission continues to go well in our first week of 2006. The fact that many landing zones are now covered in snow has not slowed down our progress. Additionally, our slingload operations enable us to transport more loads in a shorter amount of time. We have currently delivered 545 tons of relief supplies.

We had several days of bad weather that prevented us from flying, so aircrews used the time productively by conducting mandatory academic training. Additionally, maintenance crews had more time to service our Chinooks. I am very proud of hard and dedication of all Task Force Eagle Soldiers.

During the college football bowl season, Soldiers took time to watch their favorite teams. The Rose Bowl was undoubtedly the most watched game. Soldiers packed into the MWR tent to watch the national championship between the University of Texas and University of Southern California. Watching the game early in the morning may have seemed strange but it did not impact Soldiers' ability to cheer loudly for their team. Our hangar was buzzing with excitement.

Six January was a particularly eventful day for our Chinook crews. In the morning, we received a call for support concerning an emergency evacuation. A landslide hit a Pakistani bus traveling along a narrow road in the mountains. As a result, more than 40 casualties required immediate medical care. Our crews responded quickly and airlifted casualties to the 212th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in Muzaffarabad. Our rapid response saved lives.

Meanwhile, our other Chinook crews continued delivering relief supplies to remote villages. One crew set the daily record by lifting 55 tons.

I have received many questions about our redeployment date. As of today, a final decision has not been made. Our immediate higher headquarters would like to maintain aviation support in Pakistan until 31 March. Our Chinooks, however, are scheduled to be in Afghanistan within the first part of February. As a consequence, there are numerous competing factors that must be considered in the decision-making process. Although I am pressing hard to redeploy all 4th Brigade Soldiers earlier, I cannot guarantee that my proposal will be approved. I will provide concrete redeployment information when it becomes available.

As always, we greatly appreciate your prayers and support. Iron Eagle!

Respectfully,

COL Bob Johnson